



## **PDA Performance Assessment Summary or Workshop Discussion**

**October 2, 2009**

**David Brower Center, Berkeley**

On October 2, 2009, ABAG and MTC convened a group of planning directors, transit directors, Congestion Management Agency (CMA) directors and regional stakeholders to discuss the challenges and opportunities of implementing the vision for their FOCUS Priority Development Areas (PDAs). This workshop was the first step of the Assessment of Priority Development Areas, which will inform and influence regional growth scenarios, resource allocations, and policies to support focused growth through the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). This document provides a summary of the small group discussions. The next step in the Assessment is a series of small meetings with local jurisdictions. We expect to release the final Assessment report in the Spring 2010.

Should you have any questions or would like to provide additional input, please send us an email ([sailajak@abag.ca.gov](mailto:sailajak@abag.ca.gov)).

### **Part I: Complete Community Vision**

- **Frame as process of constant change, not as product:** A complete community is constantly redefined by changes in residents and workers and by changes in preferences and priorities in quality of neighborhood life.
- **Sense of place:** The specific unique qualities of the neighborhood provide an identity. Recognizing or developing these qualities is a difficult task, particularly in new suburban places. The sense of place can be defined by a wide range of elements.
  - Cultural activities, events and arts as well as a link to the history of the place can contribute to urban vitality.
  - Places of social gathering: Parks and open space provide spots of social interaction and appreciation of natural environment. Streets with a wide range of activities invite many people to walk and provide flirting opportunities.
  - Physical attributes and qualities: Design of store fronts, sidewalks, higher density buildings, and public space contributes to the pleasant qualities of the place. Architecture and urban design can produce “livable places of families with human feel.”

- Safe conditions for all people (children, women, seniors, people with disabilities) at all times of day and night.
- Social and economic stability: People can feel comfortable and secure, without threat of displacement.
- A healthy neighborhood provides ample opportunity to walk and socialize, and access to good and fresh food.
- **Schools:** Schools provide a sign of community health, place of community building. They can function as community centers. Good schools, integrated into the community, create family friendly environments. Neighborhood schools allow kids to walk. Good schools increase social interaction and property values.
- **Connections and access:**
  - Bike and pedestrian connections within the neighborhood are essential.
  - Multimodal options encourage use of transit.
  - High transit frequency, low cost (or no cost), and convenient location and connectivity supports the use of transit on regular basis.
  - Infrastructure is essential.
  - Ease of auto use and low cost parking prevents walking and use of transit.
  - Neighborhoods need easy transit connections to the rest of the city and the region, for work and for everyday activities.
  - Access to nature and open space.
- **Diversity:** Complete communities accommodate people of various ages, income levels, ethnic and cultural background. They provide amenities for families, young couples, singles, or youth. People of various physical conditions have a wide range of opportunities for a good quality of life in complete communities.
- **Community engagement:** A sense of belonging is an essential dimension of the complete communities. Thorough participation process in crucial development decisions, with input from disenfranchised communities, provides an easier development process and cohesive communities. Communities cannot be built out of segregated groups.
- **Jobs and economic health:**
  - Local jobs need to match the skills of the local residents.
  - Economic vibrancy is linked to cultural vitality.
  - Thriving retail of appropriate configuration is essential.
  - Businesses need basic infrastructure and stable rules.
- **Other:** Access to good quality food (grocery stores, fresh produce) for healthy kids, healthy people. Appropriate services for residents such as pharmacies, libraries, parks, clinics, etc.

#### Indicators, attributes, measurements

- **Land use**
  - Vacancies – percent and changes over time
  - Variety of uses/activities
  - Mix of housing types

- Jobs/housing balance
- **Building and activities**
  - Activities on street/plaza
  - Architectural history, connection of old and new buildings
  - Urban design quality
  - Amenities and activities: number, type, growth
- **Demographic data**
  - Diversity by age, household, ethnicity, income
  - Health indicators
  - Percent of residents working in the area
- **Specialized neighborhood metrics**
  - Walkability, flirability
  - Quality of life measurements
  - Number/percent of kids walking to school, attending local schools
  - Participation in community organizations and activities
  - Availability of perishable foods
  - Volume and density of pedestrians
- **Transit**
  - Reduction in auto trips
  - Transit interconnectivity

## **Part II: Development Opportunities and Constraints**

- **Building partnerships**
  - Need inter-jurisdictional coordination across geographies and sectors
  - Acknowledge and address local control vs. regional responsibility
  - Long-term time horizon of vision vs. short time horizon of political process requires engagement of elected officials early and often.
  - Need to mobilize actors around defined goals
  - Coordination with school districts and other stakeholders early on is critical to avoiding conflict late in the game and building and maintaining public support.
- **Community engagement**
  - Recognize and dissolve processes of exclusion, address division across race and class, increase public input from various sectors
  - Develop engagement early in the planning process rather than reacting to specific projects, hold charrettes in neighborhoods
  - Start involvement and knowledge building on complete communities in schools K-12
  - Tools to measure greenhouse gas emissions reductions can help spread message of the benefits of smart growth
- **Building the message**
  - Need clear message for people and elected officials

- Need to develop good examples that illustrate the objective and develop good tours
- Bring in experts to craft message
- Address perception that high density = higher crime
- Address cultural barriers
- **Addressing change**
  - Developing a long-term vision is critical to overcoming barriers to change.
  - Strategically select tasks and areas of agreement
  - Recognize and invest in missing elements of complete communities
  - Promote incremental changes that focus first on what can be immediately accomplished
  - Build trust for a solid planning and development process
  - Understand neighborhood opposition to change, to process, to outcomes
  - Need to address fear of diversity, fear of parking, traffic and crime
  - Recognize that cheap and easy driving prevents use of transit
  - Preordained sense of entitlement and exclusivity is a barrier to change
  - Benefits need to be clearly spelled out. Benefits must outweigh costs and losses, and must be developed in a timely fashion, or support will be lost.
- **Entitlement process**
  - CEQA – many questions about dysfunctionalities of the process
  - Early community input can ease the entitlement process.
  - Zoning standards disconnected from plans: stable zoning rules should be aligned and up to date with community visions
  - Consideration of a dynamic planning process: planning should be done in good and bad economic times
  - Over-burdensome regulations and fees, confusing entitlement process, and unstable decision-making process hinder development.
  - Some jurisdictions lack expertise and resources to develop and implement appropriate zoning and streamlining measures.
- **Design of buildings and streets**
  - Upgrade/retrofit existing infrastructure, buildings, and streets to improve quality of design
  - Understand what people want and what type of design and form is most appropriate for the neighborhood
  - Combining design quality with low cost materials and construction is important, and also difficult.
  - Develop good examples of complete communities and streets
  - Design is not one-size-fits-all – there is a diversity of design needs throughout the region.
  - Conventional traffic engineering is currently the primary driver of urban design. Great need exists to develop expertise for smart growth street design.
  - Design friendly family housing in an urban community with community spaces

- Developing a sense of place/sense of neighborhood identity can be a challenging and long process for some communities, particularly suburban neighborhoods.
- **Funding**
  - Many places face limited interest from new residents.
  - Funding strategies
    - Need to have public funding; define thresholds for local planning performance as funding criteria
    - Alternative funding mechanisms for projects are needed (delayed fees, new bond types, public-private financing structures).
    - Redefine the outdated goals of Redevelopment Agencies from blight to development of complete communities, equity and sustainability. Stop the contraction of Redevelopment Agencies.
    - Need to increase certainty in funding
    - Remove support and funding for autos
    - Address unreasonable landowner expectations
  - Infrastructure and utilities
    - Major needs in selected cities to expand infrastructure capacity: water, sewer, pedestrian paths
    - Consider forming funding districts for infrastructure and amenities
  - Transit
    - Funding for expanding capacity and frequency and upgrading transit infrastructure is needed.
    - Address excessive money for roadway projects
    - Provide more money for complete streets
  - Public funding for community benefits
    - Time the development of amenities and infrastructure ahead of housing construction, so the public can see the benefits of smart growth development.
    - Need investments in schools and youth programs
    - Develop and invest in cultural events that contribute to complete communities and economic vitality.
  - Land assembly/land purchase
    - Land-owners can have unreasonable expectations over value of their land.
    - Timing of land purchase can be complex. Sometimes there is a disconnect between the short-term land use and the desired phasing of the development.
  - Other
    - Need assistance with attracting developers (commercial and housing) and the right type of retail and commercial businesses

